

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 8, 15 and 22-24 are pending in the present application. Claims 2-7, 9-14 and 16-21 have been canceled and Claims 22-24 have been added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 20 were objected to; Claims 2, 4-7, 9, 11-14, 16 and 18-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Asao et al. in view of Itoh et al.; and Claims 1, 8 and 15 were indicated as allowed and Claims 3, 10 and 17 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. In light of that indication, new Claims 22-24 are submitted herewith which correspond to original Claims 3, 10 and 17, respectively, rewritten in independent form. In view of the indication that original Claims 3, 10 and 17 include allowable subject matter, Claims 22-24 are also believed to be allowable. Consequently, Applicants respectfully request that Claims 2-7, 9-14 and 16-21 be canceled without prejudice.

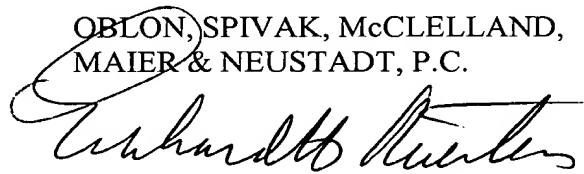
Further, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner consider and acknowledge the information disclosure statement filed on September 11, 2003.

Application No. 09/942,743
Reply to Office Action of September 25, 2003

In light of the prior indication of allowable subject matter and above discussions, and in view of the amendments presented above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and this present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request an early action favorable to that effect.

Respectfully submitted,

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